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ABSTRACT

The University of Texas at Dallas's teacher education program involves a university-wide approach. Unlike most other universities, there is no formal college or school of education at Dallas. Instead, faculty with the appropriate education and experience hold appointments in the academic disciplines and teach courses in professional education and in the discipline as well. These same teachers also engage in education-related activities such as serving on the University Council on Teacher Education and supervising student teachers. In this particular setting, the University Council on Teacher Education becomes the group that reviews and recommends policy and procedures. Using the Dallas model in particular, various strengths and limitations of the university-wide approach to teacher education are discussed. Also given considerable attention is governance and the idea of a knowledge base for teaching. It is concluded that it is crucial that educators are thoughtful, attentive, and committed to developing the knowledge base and that it is crucial to transmit effectively that knowledge and skill to improve teaching and learning. (JM)

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A UNIVERSITY-WIDE APPROACH TO TEACHER EDUCATION: SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AUTONOMY ABJURED[1]

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A UNIVERSITY-WIDE APPROACH TO TEACHER EDUCATION: SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AUTONOMY ABJURED[1]

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The objective of this paper is to help sharpen the dialogue related to the autonomy issue for university preservice teacher education. It will explore the issue of whether or not the preparation of preservice teachers can be effectively conducted in a university-wide approach to teacher education in contrast with the professional school of pedagogy approach. The Call for Papers for this conference invited papers that elected to focus on the preservice preparation of educators in a variety of settings; hence, this paper proposes to focus on a nontraditional setting.

Howsam, et. al. (1976) mentioned in their Bicentennial Commission publication, Educating A Profession, that some newer institutions are experimenting with other forms of organization which merge professional preparation programs with related academic disciplines. That statement identifies, at least in part, the organizational structure of teacher education at the University of Texas at Dallas which opened its doors for undergraduate teacher preparation in 1975. At that institution, faculty with appropriate education and experience hold appointments in the academic disciplines and teach courses in professional education and in the discipline as well, and also engage in education-related activities such as serving on the University Council on Teacher Education and supervising student teachers. It is immediately apparent that an entity known as a school, college, or department of education (SCDE) does not exist at this university. In this particular setting, the University Council on Teacher Education becomes the group that reviews and recommends policy and procedure. Functions such as admission to teacher education and to student teaching and the recommending of students for certification are performed by an entity known as the Office of Teacher Education.

1. Paper presented at the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Annual Meeting, Detroit, Michigan, February 24, 1983.

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STRENGTHS

Are there any strengths or advantages to be gained for this approach in a research-oriented university? This university believes that there are advantages. Some of the perceived strengths are as follows:

1. Teacher preparation is truly a university-wide endeavor with faculty in the various disciplines teaching the professional education courses, supervising field experiences, and participating in the governance of the endeavor through the Council on Teacher Education.

2. Participation of faculty in the disciplines insures the integration of teacher education within the mainstream of academic endeavor and thus precludes the isolation of teacher preparation from preparation in the discipline.

3. The supervision of student teachers by a faculty member with doctoral level training in the teaching field insures that a competent specialist is participating in this culminating activity of teacher preparation.

4. A research-oriented university with a commitment to teacher preparation is deemed to be the type of university that is best able to contribute to quality preparation of prospective teachers.

In addition to these perceived strengths, the University of Texas at Dallas prizes intelligence and intellectual ability as an article of faith and has taken the following steps to further insure quality in teacher preparation:

1. In addition to the long-standing criterion of a minimum grade point average of 2.50 for admission to teacher education, the university has now instituted the following criteria for admission to student teaching:

Completion of at least the following:

21 hours of the first (major) teaching field, with a GPA of 2.65 and

18 hours of the second teaching field, with a GPA of 2.65 or

39 hours of a composite teaching field, with a GPA of 2.65 and

12 hours of Professional Education, with a GPA of 2.65

Approval of faculty adviser or program representative in their field(s) of study, e.g. Mathematics, English, or Special Education and Psychology is required. Approval of two is required if student teaching is to be done in two and

Approval of the student teacher supervisor in each subject area in which student teaching is to be done is also required.

2. The provision of career preference and personality testing, as a voluntary experience, for all applicants who may wish to clarify career objectives and the validity of their choice of a teaching career.

PROGRAMS

The scope of teaching field programs is limited but the individual programs are deemed to be of some quality. Preparation programs are limited to secondary level preparation in fifteen (15) subject areas. Preparation in each of two disciplines is taken seriously as is the preparation in the professional component.

For instance, special methods courses such as curriculum and instruction in English, mathematics, music, science, etc. are viewed as essential in the preparation for teaching. Special or subject specific methods courses enjoy a high priority with our disciplinary faculty; general methods courses do not fare as well.

However, one of the most difficult things for a university disciplinarian to understand and to accept is that a teacher's knowledge of content is, or ought to be, different from that of other students in the university. B. O. Smith's (1983) observations are very helpful at this point. He says that the learning other students acquire from science, mathematics, or any other subject is not likely to be used directly in their occupational activities. For example, he notes that:

> Engineers who study history or English will not likely use what they learn in the direct pursuit of professional work. While they may use physics and mathematics directly, they are concerned with its application to particular problems rather than to its induction into the experience of another individual. The same thing can be said of students who pursue subjects for the purpose of general education. In short, knowledge gained in undergraduate courses is seldom a specific means to a particular end. To teachers, however, content is the lifeblood of their occupations, for where there is no knowledge to be taught there is little to be learned.

Hence, it is important, albeit difficult, for disciplinarians to recognize that the preservice teacher is not only to know the content, but also is able to analyze it, to take it apart and put it together in new relationships, and to understand the pitfalls the learner is likely to encounter in learning the content being taught.

Now, consider for a moment how the clinical component of teacher preparation fares in this nontraditional environment. A clinical component such as the supervision of student teachers is viewed as an activity that deserves their best effort. Other tenure-track faculty prefer to remain in the lecture room and the laboratory and choose to assign this supervision to someone known as a practice teaching specialist who is not a regularly appointed faculty member. For others, the teaching of doctoral level students and supervising their research tends to eclipse the interest and commitment of some faculty to undergraduate preservice teacher preparation.

An experienced teacher educator is prone to ask of this somewhat novel organization, "Does it really work as well as described?" "Is there a genuine commitment to the preparation of teachers or is it viewed as a peripheral activity?" "How do the teacher educators fare in the pecking order and are they rewarded for their efforts?"

LIMITATIONS

As might be expected, there are certain tensions inherent in a research-oriented university for teacher education. I will mention a few:

1. Faculty, including deans, tend to perceive teacher education as an endeavor competing for school resources rather than as an integral component of the respective schools and which contributes significantly to student enrollment in their schools.

2. Faculty positions allocated in support of teacher preparation are sometimes directed to support current research interests and the teaching of advanced courses in the discipline rather than serving the needs of teacher education; as a consequence part-time lecturers are sometimes hired to teach the professional courses.

3. Junior Faculty who serve the needs of teacher preparation and who are competing for tenure typically find it difficult to give adequate supervision of field experiences and to be available to advise students and also devote the time and concentration to research interests with attendant publishing along with their disciplinary peers; as a consequence some faculty (tenure-seeking and tenured) choose not to engage themselves in activities which extend beyond the lecture room and the research laboratory.

4. The rewards system of the research-oriented university fails to fully recognize those who are willing to devote time, resources, and energies to the collaborative role required by statute and by professional opinion for quality preparation of prospective teachers.

GOVERNANCE

Understandably, governance is not an issue in the usual sense,

since governance rests almost totally in the hands of a Council on Teacher Education with university-wide representation. In effect, the University governs the effort and there is no collective autonomy for the teacher educators since they are decentralized and dispersed. The Council is about equally composed of faculty who teach education courses and hold appointments in the parent discipline and those who are not regularly involved as a teacher of education courses.

Please note, however, that the power struggle over governance is not more important than the research struggle for knowledge about teaching (Gage, 1978). Who determines what teachers should learn does not matter so much as what kinds of knowledge and what skills of teaching are worth learning. Gage maintains that medical education rose to a new level because of the strength of the scientific basis for that profession. The theme of this conference would indicate that we are not only interested in, but committed to extending the scientific basis for the art of teaching and will likely give priority to the knowledge base in the 1980's.

KNOWLEDGE BASE FOR TEACHING

Is a university of this nature really concerned with the research struggle for knowledge about teaching? Are faculty truly involved in generating new information about how people learn? Are these teacher educators translating research findings into practical applications? The answer is - some are and some are not. There is a tendency to pursue one's research interests established early in the career and to investigate issues that are better understood and more fully appreciated by one's peers. Rather few are willing to emphasize applied studies in their own research priorities, preferring instead to emphasize basic research topics. Another relevant question is, are these faculty interested and concerned about integrating recent research findings related to effective schools? For example, do they incorporate the attributes of effective schools that relate to

curriculum and instruction which have been identified by Richard Hersch (1981) as high academic learning time, frequent and monitored homework, frequent monitoring of student progress, tightly coupled curriculum, variety of teaching strategies, and opportunities for student responsibility? The answer is that few actually incorporate findings such as these into their course materials. The reason seems to be that there is a disdain or even a distrust of that which is labeled or even perceived to be educational research. Nevertheless, some teacher educators are working at including these research findings into syllabi and bit by bit are making progress toward their inclusion.

Obviously, we have some strides to make before we are in a position to convince higher education, and practicing teachers as well, that our research findings are indeed consequential and hence worthy of their attention. Many still believe the line from the front page article in a 1977 New York Times section on education which said, "The only constant in educational research is the continuity of ambiguity.... education moves forward in ignorance."

I can identify in large measure with Chancellor I. M. Heyman's remarks in his address to the UC-Berkeley Academic Senate in January 1981 when he said that "faculty in schools of education have retreated substantially from the problems of teaching and learning encountered in the schools". He attributed this condition to an extraordinary dilemma in which education faculty are caught in a contradiction between professional service and the ethos of a prestigious letters and science faculty. But he concluded that Berkeley should maintain a professional school of education with a closely defined central mission of understanding and imporving teaching and learning in primary and secondary schools.

In my opinion, there is a slowly rising tide of concern and support for what the insightful and committed teacher educator is

about. For example, Mr. James Powell, Chairman of the Board of Regents, University of Texas System said in an address titled, "A Statement on the Education of Public School Teachers," (December 16, 1981) that "much of the research done by professors in the education field has little practical value, and little positive effect on public school teachers" and "the teaching profession does not have a growing body of useful scholarship, which would help teachers to increase their effectiveness from year to year." Implicitly, he was exhorting faculty in the University of Texas system institutions to be attentive to research findings that have promise of making teachers and schooling more effective.

Useful scholarship will extend the knowledge base by developing the principles, concepts, and theories and by validating practice so that we can raise the occupation of teaching above the level of a craft as Howsam, et. al. have suggested. The first need is still to develop and use a body of recognized professional practice. In the process, teacher educators can fulfill the needed role in the professional development of practicing teachers as well as preservice teachers. After all, high quality professional development in the field is at least as important as publishing articles and books, as suggested by the recent American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) paper (1982), "Renewing the Commitment to Teacher Education." Smith has correctly pointed out that we do have a substantial and consequential gap between our capacity to produce knowledge and our capacity to disseminate knowledge. Teacher educators must understand what research is saying and then we must apply the findings to the tasks of teaching. Finally, we must be articulate in presenting these truths to preservice and inservice teachers so that they perceive the connection between principles and practice. If they fail to make the connection, our efforts count for very little.

In summation, it is important to observe that structural organization for the preparation of preservice teachers is not a crucial matter. What is crucial is the commitment to be thoughtful about and attentive to the knowledge base and then to transmit effectively that knowledge and skill in order to improve teaching and learning in primary and secondary schools in this country.

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